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The appointment was blatantly political. By naming a Republican to the post, the President hoped obviously to discourage GOP criticism of his policy. But Republican leaders Gerald Ford and Melvin Laird will not be silenced by the political affiliation of the Ambassador in Saigon.

Not only has the appointment been viewed askance by the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hoa religious sects in South Viet Nam, but also by the Catholics there. These three religious groups are all staunchly anti-Communist, thus anti-Viet Cong. The resentment of Mr. Lodge by these groups stems from the previous tour in Viet Nam when he so heavily favored the radical branch of Buddhists who are widely regarded as either neutralists or pro-Viet Cong.

The American foreign service corps in Saigon also has reason to be deeply concerned by Mr. Johnson's appointment of Lodge. Comments the brilliant Marguerite Higgins, whose reports from Saigon are considered the finest of the war, "The Lodge appointment is viewed as an administrative nightmare by tough-minded State Department realists." She explains: "In Saigon last time, Lodge was free wheeling and divisive. He feuded with other members of the U. S. mission, such as Gen Paul Harkins. He disrupted morale by leaking stories to the press condemning close and loyal associates such as John Richard-

son, the CIA chief who, as a result, was recalled.

LBJ quite obviously did not check with Maxwell Taylor before renaming Lodge to the Saigon post. When Taylor succeeded Lodge last summer, he was aghast at the state in which he found the embassy. According to news commentator Fulton Lewis Jr., on a report from an informed State Department source, Taylor said in a sizzling cable to Secretary of State Dean Rusk that it would take him several weeks to a month to clean up the mess left by Lodge and to get the embassy files into a semblance of order.

It is indeed a pity that Mr. Lodge has been reappointed. One can only hope that this will not jeopardize our activities in Viet Nam again, and our diplomatic mission in Saigon.

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Middleburg.